

Protect Access to Health Care for People with HIV

December 20, 2016

U.S. Senate
Washington, DC

Dear Senator:

The **180** undersigned organizations are writing to **strongly urge you not to repeal or modify the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) without a clearly defined replacement plan and to maintain the current funding structure of the Medicaid program as you consider major changes to these health care programs that people living with HIV and their providers rely on.**

We are national, state, and local organizations representing people living with HIV and those affected by HIV, public health and medical providers, HIV/AIDS service organizations, housing providers, and legal advocates from across the United States.

With bipartisan support, we have made significant strides in responding to the HIV epidemic in the United States and abroad. We now have highly effective prevention and treatment options that allow us to envision ending the AIDS epidemic. However, doing so requires that individuals at risk for HIV and those living with HIV have affordable, reliable access to comprehensive health coverage.

The ACA provided many people living with HIV with health insurance coverage for the first time. Prior to the ACA's health reforms, they, and many others with chronic conditions, were denied private health insurance coverage or could not afford the high cost of the coverage available to them. Even those living on very low incomes often faced the cruel irony that they would not qualify for Medicaid coverage until they became sick and disabled by AIDS. Returning to a pre-ACA state would be disastrous for many individuals who are finally able to access health care under the current initiatives and would undermine public health efforts to end the AIDS epidemic.

We are deeply concerned that efforts to quickly do away with the ACA, without simultaneously providing meaningful health coverage alternatives, will leave millions of Americans uninsured or underinsured. People with HIV and countless others cannot afford to be stripped of their health insurance coverage. Their health, and in many cases their lives, and our nation's public health depend on preserving and building on the reforms that have worked for them, providing access to essential, life-saving health care services and prescription drugs. We strongly urge consideration of the key reform principles listed below before repealing the law or modifying the programs.

- **Prevent any disruptions in health coverage**, as the failure to do so will have negative health consequences for up to 30 million individuals whose health coverage is at risk in addition to serious public health and economic consequences for all Americans. Do not modify current law without having meaningful, adequately funded alternatives available. We believe it is critical to have a plan for seamless continuation of coverage in place *before* announcing repeal or modifying the law to avoid negative repercussions in the market from insurers.

This letter is sponsored by the Federal AIDS Policy Partnership's HIV Health Care Access Working Group. The HHCAWG co-chairs are Carmel Shachar with the Center for Health Law and Policy Innovation (cshachar@law.harvard.edu), Amy Killelea with the National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors (akillelea@NASTAD.org) and Andrea Weddle with the HIV Medicine Association (aweddle@hivma.org).

- **Maintain critical reforms that address unfair or discriminatory insurer practices**, including laws that prohibit insurers from denying coverage based on pre-existing conditions or charging individuals more based on health status or gender, or excluding coverage of treatments for specific conditions. These consumer protections should not be contingent on continuous coverage requirements.
- **Maintain the current funding structure, including the entitlement, of the Medicaid program**, to allow states to respond to current need and increased demand for Medicaid coverage during tough economic times, unanticipated outbreaks or disasters and when there are health innovations, such as the recent curative breakthrough treatments for hepatitis C.
- **Ensure access to a minimum essential benefits package** that includes the range of services and treatments that people at risk for and those living with HIV need to stay healthy, including prescription drug benefits, substance use and mental health treatment, and preventive services without cost-sharing.
- **Keep health coverage, health services and prescription drugs affordable** by ensuring adequate, up front premium and cost sharing assistance for lower income individuals to afford health plans that provide comprehensive coverage. Low income individuals need assistance at the time the bills are due or they will forgo medically necessary treatment and care. Maintain the bans on annual and lifetime benefits caps to ensure access to care and coverage when it's needed most.
- **Sustain strong non-discrimination protections** such as Section 1557 of the ACA that prohibit insurers or providers from discriminating against individuals on the basis of their race, color, national origin, sex, age or disability.

We hope that we can count on you to consider the health care and socioeconomic needs of people living with HIV and millions of others who now rely on the marketplaces and Medicaid for access to their care and treatment. We are hopeful that any health care reforms proposed under the new Administration and Congress will provide protections for those living with chronic conditions and build upon the lessons learned over the last eight years of health care reform efforts.

Respectfully submitted by the **180** undersigned organizations,

ALABAMA

Southern AIDS Coalition

ARIZONA

Southern Arizona AIDS Foundation

ARKANSAS

Jefferson Comprehensive Care System, Inc.

CALIFORNIA

AIDS Legal Referral Panel

Alameda County Office of HIV Health Services

APAIT, a division of Special Service for Groups

APLA Health

Asian Health Services

California LGBT Health and Human Services Network

Equality California

HIV ACCESS

HIVE

Law Foundation of Silicon Valley

Natural Wholistic Health & Wellness Research Center

PleasePrEPMe

Positive Women's Network - USA

Project Inform

Sacramento LGBT Community Center

San Francisco AIDS Foundation

Sierra HOPE

Transgender Law Center

West Hollywood Community Housing Corporation

COLORADO

Boulder Community Health

CONNECTICUT

Human Resource Agency New Britain

DELAWARE

Delaware HIV Consortium

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA (DC)

ADAP Advocacy Association (aaa+)

AIDS Alliance for Women, Infants, Children, Youth
& Families AIDS United

AIDS United

CAEAR Coalition

Community Access National Network

Family and Medical Counseling Services, Inc.

G III Associates
 GLMA: Health Professionals Advancing LGBT Equality
 HealthHIV
 HIPS
 Human Rights Campaign
 National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS
 Directors
 National Association of County and City Health
 Officials
 National Black Gay Men's Advocacy Coalition
 NBGMAC
 National Black Justice Coalition
 National Center for Transgender Equality
 National Latino AIDS Action Network
 National LGBTQ Task Force Action Fund)
 NMAC
 Out2Enroll
 Presbyterian AIDS Network, PC USA
 RAHMA
 The AIDS Institute
 The American Academy of HIV Medicine
 Urban Coalition for HIV/AIDS Prevention Services
 (UCHAPS)
FLORIDA
 Broward County - Ryan White Part A Program
 Comprehensive Care Clinic
 Hope and Help Center of Central Florida, Inc.
 Northeast Florida AIDS Network, Inc.
 Suncoast Health Council, Inc.
GEORGIA
 Clarion Group
 Georgia AIDS Coalition
 HIV Dental Alliance
 iknowAwareness LLC
 Trans Housing Atlanta Program, Inc.
HAWAII
 Gregory House Programs
 Hawaii Island HIV/AIDS Foundation
 Maui AIDS Foundation
 The CHOW Project
IOWA
 Siouxland Pride Alliance
IDAHO
 Dab the AIDS Bear Project
ILLINOIS
 AIDS Foundation of Chicago
 Chicago House and Social Service Agency
 Chicago Women's AIDS Project
 HIV Prevention Justice Alliance
 Howard Brown Health
 Open Door Health Center of Illinois
 Test Positive Aware Network
 WHARP
INDIANA
 LifeCare
KENTUCKY
 Matthew 25 AIDS Services

LOUISIANA
 Office of Health Policy and AIDS Funding
 PWN-USA-Louisiana
MARYLAND
 AIDS Action Baltimore
 Center For Black Equity-Baltimore
 Moveable Feast Inc.
 Privia
 Tell Me More Social Research and Consulting
 Total Health Care
MASSACHUSETTS
 AIDS Action Committee of Massachusetts
 Community Catalyst
 Community Research Initiative of New England, Inc.
 John Snow, Inc.
 NEAETC
 New North Citizens Council Inc
 Treatment Access Expansion Project
MICHIGAN
 AL GAMEA A.R.I.S.E (Association of Refugees, Immigrants and Survivor
 of human trafficking Engage in the AIDS response)
 CARES
 Health Emergency Lifeline Programs
 HIV/AIDS Alliance of Michigan Lansing Area
 AIDS Network
 Michigan Coalition for HIV Health and Safety
 SEMHAC
 Unified - HIV Health and Beyond
MINNESOTA
 Clare Housing
 Hope House of St. Croix Valley
 Minnesota AIDS Project
 Open Arms of Minnesota
 Rural AIDS Action Network
MISSISSIPPI
 Community Impact, Inc.
MISSOURI
 Erise Williams and Associates Inc
 Saint Louis Effort for AIDS
NEVADA
 Las Vegas Urban League
NEW JERSEY
 Buddies of New Jersey
 New Jersey Association on Correction
NEW YORK
 ACRIA
 Amida Care
 ASCNYC
 BOOM!Health
 Callen-Lorde Community Health Center
 Community Health Action
 Gabriel Cohen, MD
 Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC)
 God's Love We Deliver
 Harm Reduction Coalition
 Housing Works, Inc

Ijo Orisa Church
 Knights of Columbus
 Lambda Legal
 Latino Commission on AIDS
 Love Heals /Acria
 Love Heals the Alison Gertz Foundation
 for AIDS Education, Inc.
 New York City Department of Health
 and Mental Hygiene
 NY Transgender Advocacy Group
 Prevention Access Campaign
 SMART University
 The Center for HIV Law and Policy
 Treatment Action Group
 Unique People Sevices
 VillageCare

NORTH CAROLINA

Community Alternative Housing
 Fairgrove Primary Health
 HomeCare for the Carolinas Clinic
 Southern HIV/AIDS Strategy Initiative (SASI)
 at Duke University
 The Red Ribbon Society
 The Steady Collective

OHIO

ADAP Educational Initiative
 Association of Nurses in AIDS Care
 Miami Valley Positives for Positives
 Nightsweats & T-cells, Co.
 Piedmont Health Services & Sickle Cell Agency
 The Gazelle Giggles Play Institute, Inc.

OREGON

Health Education Network
 Multnomah County Health Department
 Partnership Project
 Quest Center for Integrative Health

PENNSYLVANIA

ACT UP Philadelphia
 AIDS Law Project of Pennsylvania
 AIDS Resource Alliance, Inc.
 AIDS Services Center at St. Luke's University
 Health Network
 Campaign To End AIDS and ACT Up Philadelphia
 Caring Communities For AIDS, Inc.
 Curtis LTC Pharmacy

SOUTH CAROLINA

Lowcountry AIDS Services C.A.B.
 Newhorizons Healthcare
 Positive Women's Network – USA
 South Carolina Campaign to End AIDS

TENNESSEE

Columbia CARES
 Friends For Life
 Nashville CARES
 Tennessee Asso. of People With AIDS TAPWA

TEXAS

AIDS Arms, Inc.

Georgetown University
 House of Blahnik, Inc.
 Legacy Community Health
 Program for Wellness Restoration, PoWeR
 Resource Center
 Valley AIDS Council
 Westbrook Clinic

UTAH

Utah Ryan White Part C/D Programs

VIRGINIA

Appalachian Independence Center, Inc.
 Blue Ridge Independent Living Center
 HIV Medicine Association
 Ryan White Medical Providers Coalition
 disAbility Resource Center

WASHINGTON

Pierce County AIDS Foundation